

Radical #5 Radical Hospitality

Eric Cepin
1-29-23

Today, I want to start with a beautiful picture of Martha Stewart saying, “Do you know that



unwelcome guest that everyone wishes would leave already?” This idea of the unwelcome guest is something we are familiar with: we talk about who is welcome and unwelcome in our culture or our lives: if they are hard to live with and hard to engage with, we wish they would leave. We deal with this internally, both from having such a guest and from **BEING** such a guest.

I moved a lot as a child and felt I was always intruding on others. An example happened in high school when I tried out for the basketball team at the height of Rincon High School’s glory. This campus had both the regular Rincon students (“stupid students”) and University High students (“smart students”). The freshman team was all UHS students except for me. I felt unwelcome from the beginning, both because I was a Rincon student and because I was a Christian. I understand what it feels like to be continually hated and unwelcome. Most of us have stories like this.

In the NT, Paul talks how Jesus impacts the world to bring us from being unwanted to wanted.

Ephesians 2

17 He (Jesus) came and preached peace to you who were far away (Gentiles) and peace to those who were near (Hebrews). **18** For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

The reality is that Adam and Eve decided to take over their own lives and disobey and were pushed out of the garden. We all as humanity are all unwanted guests, whether we are Jew or Greek, since we have all rebelled and are now chasing sin. Here it says God brought us close:

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. **21** In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **22** And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

We are talking about *radical* hospitality; Martha Stewart talks about *regular* hospitality when I invite people whom I want to my house and hope they like it. Radical hospitality has nothing to do with inviting anyone to your house although it might include this. Radical hospitality is that all of us are *unwanted* and that all of us are *wanted* in Christ and have a place and belong. This is the invitation to invite people to **BELONG**. When they belong, emphasize this to others that in Christ you belong and that if you aren't yet part, you have an opportunity to belong.

In July 2020, Sue and I spoke about "The Kingdom of God is hospitality." This sermon is a companion to that sermon; I recommend going back and listening to it.

I have two questions for you today:

1. **Where have you been the unwanted guest?** Feel and remember what it is like to be unwanted.
2. **Who is at this moment your unwanted guest?** You are struggling to say, "You belong to me, I belong to you." You can't wait for them to leave. This is important!

The early church understood hospitality. Consider the following verses:

Rom 12:13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. *Practice* hospitality.

Heb 13:2 Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

I Peter 4:9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

A quick observation about the early church's view of hospitality. This word means "stranger love, love of the stranger." But the Rom:12:13 talks about sharing with people who aren't strangers, Heb 13:2 is about how to treat people who are strangers and I Peter is about people within your community. Our earlier sermon is about all of us being strangers and the call is that we would be loved with a brotherly love of family. A couple of other observations:

1. ***Practice*** means an ongoing pursuit of something: when it's repeated over and over, hospitality becomes our very identity. We do something so much that we want it. Here is a quote from Justin Martyr which reflects how Christian hospitality turned the world upside down. The early church changed things.

JUSTIN MARTYR (155AD)

"We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies."



The early Christian church memorized the Sermon on the Mount and turned the other cheek. A monk once stood between 2 gladiators and the crowd killed the monk and this ultimately ended the gladiator games. The early church lived this out: they offered hospitality to those who persecute you.

2. Jesus's view of children:

Luke 2:17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,

The early church believed in the image of God and would wander about and collect unwanted babies (usually girls) from the garbage and raise them on their own.

3. The Good Samaritan story: The early church answered the question of “who is my neighbor?” and they lived this out and changed the world. We are here because of them! It is powerful and radical: the things the early church did were difficult and inconvenient and impinge on our demands, longings, and needs.

There are two steps to become like the early church:

Step 1

We need to have the mind of Christ: We need His way of thinking and being.

Philippians 2

1-2 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, **2** then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Christian hospitality begins with your experience of Jesus. We talked about radical courage: of being someone willing to tell our stories of how we came to Jesus, whether they are long and quick. When we enter the kingdom, we will realize an encouragement from each other to stand on.

Paul wants us to be of one mind and spirit and love and talk about where we have experienced God's tenderness and courage; in particular, where did this show up in the *beginning* of your story?

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

After you tasted this, you need someone to follow in this, someone who transforms things.

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; He became an unwanted guest! **7** Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature[a] of a servant being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

The beauty of having the mind of Christ is that the invitation is that we become the people whom we feel are unwanted in our lives. If you want to find Jesus, this is where he shows up! I guarantee you that he is in the places where you felt most unwanted! This is where he will shine the most!

This is a radical invitation to be like Jesus who gives up his position and takes unwanted people (all of us) and brings us into community with him and makes us wanted, even part of his family.

Step 2

Practical step of **interruption opportunity**. Every day, you go places, do things that you planned. God may be in these but God is **REALLY** in the interruptions of your life.

We heard about the beautiful story of Jesus getting off the boat and a very important person comes and tells him about his daughter being sick. As Jesus is on his way to heal her, there is a large crowd following him and an unwanted woman who had suffered from bleeding for many years touches his robe. People didn't know she was there and yet she is determined to be healed. Jesus feels his power leave him: should he keep on his agenda to heal the girl or stop and heal the woman? He stops because he knows someone touched him with intent. He is re-establishing her into community: No one will know she is healed unless he stops and is inconvenienced and takes a risk. Think about this interruption and the interruptions in your life. Your interruptions are divine moments in your life! You have to change your directions and goals and stop and give dignity to these interruptions and look for what Jesus is going to do.

In your story, where have you been the unwanted guest? Hold this story. ***This story defines you;*** you understand who you are based on this story. My basketball story told me not to be on the JV team because of my freshman year experience. Yet, I was playing a pick-up game my sophomore year and was told I was really good by a JV player who didn't remember me. This guy offered me radical hospitality: he re-authored my unwantedness.

Eph 2:19 should anchor us!

9 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,

You belong to the household of God, no matter where you go and what you experience. Jesus tells us we are his brother and are anchored in his kingdom and therefore we can offer this to others.

This is what Jesus says to us: Who is our unwanted guest?

Matt 25:40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

The person who is unwanted (based on how you feel inside), that person is Jesus. He is there powerfully and tangibly in these places. Our job is to open up a place for Jesus in these places!

My encouragement to you today is to keep doing what the Village does. We haven’t mastered hospitality but many people have offered this to others in your brokenness and feelings of being unwanted. The invitation of this sermon series is to take this to the next level where we get to experience Jesus and the transformation of our culture and one another.

This works over time: a lot of us want action and results quickly. Curt Tompson is a neuro-biologist and psychiatrist who says that every time we care for someone in a meaningful way, our brain moves 1 mm towards health. Health comes very slowly and one day you can look back and see a change. He says we need to go back to the traumatic and unwanted stops with one another and we will find that it’s like going back to your old house as a child. It’s just not as big and daunting as we once imagined it was. Radical hospitality helps to shrink those wounds that once defined us. We won’t see results today but in 20 years we will. This is the invitation!